

Foreign Crises and the CIA

During the past 10 days or so President Kennedy and his new Administration have weathered their first period of serious crises.

The crises have all been external and all involved major foreign policy decisions.

As the long-steaming situation in the Congo finally reached at least a temporary cooling-off stage, the equally dangerous one in Laos came to a head. Then last week the abortive Cuba invasion flared. And on the heels of its failure came the revolt of the ultra-rightist French generals in Algeria.

A week ago the world outlook from our point of view was almost entirely dark. Today it is far from bright, but much improved. The impression must be that our youthful President and his Administration have weathered this period of storms well.

The Communists continue to grab all the territory they can in Laos before a cease-fire. The future coalition Government will contain Communists and may be dominated by them. South Viet Nam may come under increasing Red pressure. But the possibility of World War III being touched off in Southeast Asia is much more remote than it was a short time ago.

No one in Washington, Mr. Kennedy least of all, tries to deny that we suffered a debacle in the failure of the anti-Castro invasion and insurrection. But we are engaged in a thorough investigation of why it failed. There is quiet confidence in the capital that there will be another try—and that there will not be another failure. For all his momentary success, the feeling is that Castro's days are numbered. We know now for the first time that Latin American sentiment is overwhelmingly against—not for—him.

In France we are witnessing another triumph of one of the genuinely great men of the 20th century.

De Gaulle has demonstrated his greatness more than ever in dealing with the mutineers. NATO and the free world breathe easier at the ending of the threat to a nation which is one of their

or Laos, the Kennedy Administration has made several major policy decisions and will have more to do in the future. The same is true. In both these cases,

the President has been at pains to make it clear that decisions have been made after consultations with former President Eisenhower and key members of his Administration, so as to effect continuity of policy, unity of purpose and bipartisan support as far as possible. Mr. Kennedy has also been at pains to make it clear, however, that the decisions taken since Jan. 20 have been solely his own and that he assumed the sole responsibility for them.

He has repeatedly pointed out that while in retrospect some of these decisions may seem unwise and might have been different had he the gift of clairvoyance, they all were taken on the best information available and were thoroughly thought through.

Whether he or his predecessor—always were given the best information that might have been compiled for them is a question that now seems unavoidable and the answer to which is being sought. Mr. Kennedy is determined to get the answer.

The whole question obviously revolves around the Central Intelligence Agency and its director, Allen W. Dulles. Has it done the best job possible of collecting intelligence? Has it gone beyond its function of collecting information and made policy decisions, which it has no business doing?

The CIA would insist that it has never made policy or tried to make it. Its critics would challenge that insistence.

The CIA would say that it believes it has done the best job humanly possible in collecting intelligence and information. It would admit that it has had failures. Something went wrong in Cuba, though it would not admit that the Cuban fiasco was due primarily to faulty intelligence. It would admit that it had no warning of the imminence of the French generals' mutiny, though it did know of their mutinous tendencies. But then, there is every evidence that De Gaulle himself was in the same boat.

The CIA by its nature is bound to have occasional failures. It cannot complain when they are justifiably criticized. It can only analyze the reasons for the failures and try to avoid making the same mistakes. The CIA's operations and its personnel are under constant review. The public would do well to suspend judgment.